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SUBJECT: LEBANON: MARCH 14 WORKSHOP: IMPOSSIBLE TO COEXIST WITH
HIZBALLAH'S ARMS

REF: (A) BEIRUT 392
(B) BEIRUT 510

¶1. (SBU) Summary. On July 23, the March 14 Secretariat held a workshop at the Bristol Hotel in Beirut to discuss and incorporate public opinion into a draft paper on civil peace and building a state of independence. The paper concluded that it is impossible to build such a state while Hizballah possesses weapons. The paper also called for and outlined how to revitalize the solidarity sparked by the 2005 Cedar Revolution. The workshop is part of the Secretariat's ongoing efforts to reconnect with its constituency and develop a common political program. End Summary.

ATTENDEES OF VARIOUS
BACKGROUNDS

¶2. (U) Approximately 70 people attended the March 14 workshop entitled "Civil Peace and Building of the State of Independence" at the Bristol hotel in Beirut on July 23. Representatives from the March 14 coalition attended, including March 14 SYG Fares Souaid, MPs Samir Franjeh, Mostafa Allouch (Future Movement), George Adwan (Lebanese Forces, LF), Elias Atallah (Democratic Left), Dory Chamoun, head of the National Liberal Party, former MP Camille Ziadeh and Antoine Haddad (from the Democratic Renewal Party of Minister Nassib Lahoud), Michel Mecattaf (Kataeb party) and Eddy Abillama (LF), as well as journalists, academics, civil society and youth representatives from March 14. Independent Shia figures such as Lokman Slim, Malek Mroueh, and Jad Akhaoui, and Tom Harb and Kamal Batal from the World Council of the Cedar Revolution also attended.

SYG: MARCH 14 IS MADE
BY THE LEBANESE PEOPLE

¶3. (U) In his opening remarks, March 14 SYG Fares Souaid, suggesting that some people are hoping March 14 will break apart, asserted that, "The secret of March 14 is that it is made by the Lebanese people and is not a political movement." He added that these workshops aim to engage public participation and to clarify a common political view. Souaid noted that the workshop March 14 planned to hold on Syrian-Lebanese relations was postponed because of the May clashes but will be held soon. The Secretariat previously held workshops on the Ta'if Agreement (Ref B) and electoral reform.

INDEPENDENCE CANNOT COEXIST
WITH HIZBALLAH'S ARMS

¶4. (U) The workshop draft paper stressed that a "state of independence cannot be built in the presence of Hizballah weapons." It also called for revitalizing the Lebanese solidarity sparked by

the 2005 Cedar Revolution in order to build a civil modern state.
The paper outlined six ways to reignite this solidarity:

- Asserting the state's right to sole authority over the armed forces;
- Isolating Lebanon, at the military and security levels, from the regional conflict;
- Ensuring Lebanon's protection by asserting its allegiance to a new modern and open Arab regional scheme;
- Reinforcing national co-existence through building a strong state that is less influenced by confessional and partisan conflicts;
- Protecting the society by restoring the credibility of the Lebanese values that have been aggressed upon by the Syrian hegemony and corruption within the governmental institutions;
- Protecting civil peace.

VIEWS FROM THE PUBLIC

15. (SBU) Kamal Batal, from the World Council of the Cedar Revolution, called for placing all of Lebanon under UN Chapter VII authority and to prevent all weapon smuggling into the country. He also spoke about abolishing all political parties that do not believe in the Lebanese entity, naming in particular the Syrian Socialist National Party and the (radical) Sunni Liberation party.

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16. (SBU) A youth from the Lebanese Forces noted that March 14's existence has become fragile and called for strengthening its position in the political arena. He further questioned the position of some unnamed March 14 leaders, implying Carlos Edde (who recently left the alliance) and Walid Jumblatt.

REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE "ORIGINAL" FPM

17. (SBU) MP Samir Franjeh informed the audience that the paper was only a draft and their opinions would be taken into consideration for the final document, which will be presented to March 14 leaders for approval.

COMMENT

19. (SBU) One of March 14's biggest challenges in the run-up to the 2009 parliamentary elections is reconnecting with its supports and regaining the momentum and unity that sparked the 2005 Cedar Revolution. The convention that the bloc held on March 14th at the Biel conference center (Ref A) and follow-up workshops are the result of the Secretariat's efforts to address this challenge. End comment.

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